

No Condemnation

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I was talking to a young man I met while we were hiking in Oregon during a photo shoot for one of our CD stories. He was asking me what I was doing lugging a harp around in the woods and I explained a little to him of what we did. I told him about the stories we told and he asked me what the stories were about. I explained that we told stories from the people who were involved in Christ's/Messiah's ministry and that we focused on His compassion, restoration and the second chances He extended to everyone. I told him that we were staying away from the traditional fire and brimstone condemnation messages that were so frequently heard from the people who call themselves Christians. He thought for a moment, and then said that he thought the world was really lacking in stories about compassion, especially from the church.

This conversation and his comments got me to thinking. I asked myself, what was Jesus/Y'shua's main message? What did He primarily come to reveal? I find at the heart of Y'shua's message an often quoted event that occurred when the woman caught in adultery was brought before Him by the Pharisees to use as a test. We read about it in John 8:3-11.

- ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group
⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.
⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"
⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger.
⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."
⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.
⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.
¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"
¹¹ "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." -----
John 8:3-11 (NIV)

There are two aspects that need to be noted here. First, Y'shua answers the challenge of the Pharisees by issuing his own challenge. He invites them to go ahead and stone the woman IF! any of them could show that they were without sin. Their ability to condemn the woman could only truly stand if they could themselves be without any sin of their own. Jesus never really addresses the fact that the woman really was caught in the very act of adultery. He never denies that her punishment according to Torah is to be stoned to death. However, it must also be noted that if Torah was to be followed in the prescribed fashion for this situation, the man involved in the act of adultery must also be brought

with the woman and they both be stoned. Y'shua in effect ignores the Pharisee's demand for Torah justice because they have not followed Torah protocol.

I believe that He is beginning to show the world what it will look like to live under the renewed covenant that He is about to release through the empowering of the Holy Spirit/Ruach haKodesh. I think this is supported by his next statement, "Neither do I condemn you..." because He was the only one in that crowd, in the history of the world, that could rightfully condemn her by the conditions he had just set down.

The second aspect is the last half of the previous quote, "Go now and leave your life of sin." The fact that Jesus does not condemn the woman is immediately followed by a condition that He presents to her. In effect, Y'shua is saying, your ability to leave here in a "not condemned" state must be accompanied by a "leave your life of sin" state performed on her part. She must now use the freedom from condemnation to engage in a new lifestyle that will be free from the activity that brought her to this encounter. I believe that Y'shua does not just tell her to suddenly change, He in-fills her with the Holy Spirit/Ruach haKodesh so that she can have the power and guidance to live this new way. Y'shua later describes this empowerment to the disciples in His promise to send the Comforter or Counselor,"who will guide you into all truth. " John 16:13.

Y'shua is not setting aside the Torah here as many within the Church teach today. He makes that clear in Matthew 5 where he says, "Do not think that I have come to destroy the Torah. I have not come to destroy but to fulfill or confirm it." He goes on to say that until heaven and earth pass away, not even the slightest detail will be removed from the Torah. He also tells us that if we love Him, we will keep or guard—walk in the ways of His Torah. This state of "not condemned" or Grace, if you please, is found throughout the Torah.

Especially is it demonstrated in the imagery of Yom Kippur. We see here a picture of God/YHVH making a way for the priests of the Tabernacle/Mishkan to actually cover over the sins of the people who are willing to bring them before YHVH in repentance. The blood of a sacrificed lamb was used to demonstrate this covering, but it was not the blood of the animal that actually did the work of covering. It merely pointed toward the time when Y'shua would accomplish this through His own sacrifice. In effect, Y'shua is telling the adulterous woman that He is a Priest after the order of Melech-Tzadik and that He is offering her an opportunity to repent, (Hebrew word *teshuva*= turn away from your sin and return to come face to face with YHVH) and have her sins covered by His sacrifice.

Not only is she being offered an opportunity to have her sins covered, but she is being empowered by the Ruach haKodesh to actually be able to live according to Torah. What is called the "New Covenant" by the church is really not new at all as John tells us in 1John 2:7. It is actually the Torah changing places. No longer is it written on stone tablets for us to read and walk away and forget, but now, the Ruach haKodesh writes it on the fleshly tablets of our hearts and we can, through the power He gives us actually walk out the path that Torah describes. We have a heart transplant from a heart of stone that cannot

respond to the Ruach haKodesh, to a heart of flesh that is responsive to the Truth that the Ruach haKodesh reveals to us. Because the Ruach haKodesh is God, He will not contradict Himself, so the Truths He reveals to us will be in line with His Torah. Torah is not being set aside here as Y'shua deals with this woman, Torah is being confirmed and demonstrated by the Giver of Torah; the very Word Himself.

It is also within Torah that we find the definitions for sin that Y'shua tells the woman to now turn away from. If Y'shua is preparing to set aside Torah with his death on the stake, why is He telling this woman to leave her life of sin which is defined in the Torah? It is important to note that Y'shua does not condemn this woman and leave her to die. He restores her. This restoration has several aspects. First, He removes the condemnation. Then He empowers her by the infilling of the Ruach haKodesh, and finally calls her to make *teshuvah* and leave her sin life by returning to Torah life.

Remember that Torah tells us in Deuteronomy 28 and 29 that following Torah will bring blessing and life to us and disregarding Torah will bring cursing and death to us. As we read through this section of Torah, we come to Deuteronomy 30:19 where YHVH says: "I call Heaven and Earth to witness against you today: I place before you Life and Death, Blessing and Curse. Choose life so that you and your children will live." I believe that it is important to understand that YHVH is not standing there waiting for us to not follow Torah so He can zap us with curses. Rather He is warning us that if we wonder off the path that He has laid out for us to keep us safe with blessing and life, then cursing and death will follow because we are removing ourselves from His sphere of protection.

I believe that the prophet Hosea gives us some clarity on this in Hosea 11:1-8 where YHVH is describing His feelings for a recalcitrant Israel.

Hos 11:1 "When Israel was only a child, I loved him. I called out, 'My son!'--called him out of Egypt.

Hos 11:2 But when others called him, he ran off and left me. He worshiped the popular sex gods, he played at religion with toy gods.

Hos 11:3 Still, I stuck with him. I led Ephraim. I rescued him from human bondage, But he never acknowledged my help,

Hos 11:4 never admitted that I was the one pulling his wagon, That I lifted him, like a baby, to my cheek, that I bent down to feed him.

Hos 11:5 Now he wants to go back to Egypt or go over to Assyria-- anything but return to me!

Hos 11:6 That's why his cities are unsafe--the murder rate skyrockets and every plan to improve things falls to pieces.

Hos 11:7 My people are hell-bent on leaving me. They pray to god Baal for help. He doesn't lift a finger to help them.

Hos 11:8 But how can I give up on you, Ephraim? How can I turn you loose, Israel? How can I leave you to be ruined like Admah, devastated like luckless Zeboim? I can't bear to even think such thoughts. My insides churn in protest. (from the Message version)

Y'shua is never the condemner or the accuser. It is the enemy, ha-satan that does that work. Y'shua calls us to Torah so that we can be safe and blessed. He gave his life blood so that our sins are covered as we see in Yom Kippur. He provided the way for the Ruach haKodesh to infill us and empower us to be able to walk out Torah. In Y'shua, there is no condemnation:

Rom 8:1 There is, then, now no condemnation to those who are in Messiah יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (Scriptures 98 version)